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ABSTRACT

This document presents the proceedings of a forum held to study the problem of at-risk students and dropouts in South Carolina and to bring together representatives from the state's public schools, institutions of higher education, business and industry, government agencies, community organizations, and private citizens in the hopes of encouraging a greater coordination of group efforts dealing with at-risk youth. Included are the program agenda, an executive summary of the proceedings, and summaries of presentations by Sam Drew, superintendent of Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School where the forum was held; Linda Shirley, South Carolina Network Coordinator at the National Dropout Prevention Center; Esther Ferguson, founder and co-chairman of the National Dropout Prevention Fund; and John V. Hamby, acting director of the National Dropout Prevention Center. Four panelist presentations are included: (1) "Contributing Factors" (Ira Barbell); (2) "Early Identification and Intervention" (Eleanor Duff); (3) "Alternatives" (Robert Watson); and (4) "Staff Development and Training" (James Fouche). Forum participants' small group work is summarized and additional comments from the forum are given. (NB)

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YOUTH AT RISK:

South Carolina's Search For Direction

Proceedings of a Forum March 23, 1988

NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION CENTER
AT CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

WIL LOU GRAY
OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL
Research and Training Center

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Youth At Risk:
South Carolina's Search For Direction

Proceedings of a Forum
March 23, 1988

Co-sponsored by the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center

The National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University serves as a resource base and clearinghouse for those involved in reducing the public school dropout rate.

The mission of the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center is to explore needs, sponsor and/or conduct research, collect/disseminate information, and provide training to agencies and individuals who are concerned with at-risk youth.

For more information, contact the National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University, 393 College Avenue, Clemson, South Carolina 29634-0725, telephone (803)656-2599.

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Preface

Each year more than 700,000 public school students drop out of school. Nationally, one in every four will not graduate. In South Carolina the problem is even more serious. This alarming rate of school dropouts poses a major threat to our economy and our society. Dropouts already cost the country billions of dollars each year in lost tax revenues, welfare and unemployment payments, and crime prevention. The loss of human potential is incalculable. The young people in our nation and our state are at risk.

The Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School's Research and Training Center and the South Carolina Network of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University recognized the need to collaborate efforts in sponsoring a forum that would give insight into key dropout issues. A forum planning committee composed of members from the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center and South Carolina Network advisory boards and staffs was organized. This committee developed the agenda, compiled the participant list, and implemented the forum.

The forum's title, "Youth At Risk: South Carolina's Search for Direction," is indicative of the present status. We are a state with many at-risk youth to be served by a considerable number of agencies. Sometimes the efforts of these groups transpire in isolation from each other, thereby diluting their effects. A major problem arising from this state of affairs is how to bring about a greater coordination of group efforts dealing with at-risk youth to impact the dropout problem more effectively and efficiently. Thus, the forum committee developed a participant list, which included representatives from public school, higher education, business and industry, government agencies, community organizations, and private citizens.

Planning an agenda that included disseminating information as well as receiving information proved to be a productive format. Participants listened to a panel of experts discuss four key issues and then responded to those remarks in small group sessions.

Special thanks to Mary Durham and Karen McKenzie of the National Dropout Prevention Center for making this proceedings document a reality.

Linda J. Shirley
State Coordinator
National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University

Agenda

9:30 a.m.	Registration
10:00 a.m.	Welcome Mr. Sam Drew, Superintendent Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Mrs. Linda J. Shirley South Carolina Network Coordinator National Dropout Prevention Center
10:15 a.m.	Remarks Mrs. Esther Feguson Founder and Co-Chairman National Dropout Prevention Fund
10:30 a.m.	Overview Dr. John V. "Dick" Hamby Acting Director National Dropout Prevention Center
11:00 a.m.	Panelists' Presentations "Contributing Factors" Mr. Ira Barbell Executive Assistant Children and Families S.C. Department of Social Services "Early Identification and Intervention" Dr. Eleanor Duff Professor of Early Childhood Education University of South Carolina "Alternatives" Dr. Robert S. Watson Superintendent Greenwood School District 50 "Staff Development and Training" Dr. James Fouche Dean, School of Education Winthrop College
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	Forum Participants' Small Group Work
4:00 p.m.	Wrap-up and Reception Dr. Jonnie B. Spaulding, Director Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center

Small Group Facilitators

Dr. Elizabeth Gressette, Executive Director
Palmetto State Teachers Association

Ms. Norma Higgins, Education Program Coordinator
Columbia Collaborative on At-Risk Youth

Ms. Carol Murdaugh, Director of Psychological and Social Services
Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School

Mr. Jim Neal, Director, Division of Prevention, Education, and Intervention
S.C. Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Mrs. Tunky Riley, Chairperson
South Carolina Dropout Prevention Network

Mrs. Brenda Story, Project Facilitator
Spartanburg High School

Mr. Bill Walters, Principal
Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School

Recorders

Mrs. Gaie Wilson, Data Control Clerk
National Dropout Prevention Center

Mr. Richard Guess, Counselor
Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School

Ms. Liz Elkins, Counselor
Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School

Mr. Tad Ridgell, Manager, School-Based Programs
S.C. Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Ms. Gaye Christmus, Manager of Information Services
S. C. Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Mrs. Mary Durham, Administrative Specialist
National Dropout Prevention Center

Ms. Debra Haney, Dean of Students
Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School

Executive Summary

"Youth at Risk: South Carolina's Search for Direction"

March 23, 1988
Co-sponsored by the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School and the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University, South Carolina Network

Approximately 80 South Carolina leaders representing state agencies, public and higher education, business and industry, civic organizations, and private citizens gathered for a one-day forum at the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School in Columbia, South Carolina.

Summary of Remarks

Remarks: Nationally, one in every four first graders fails to graduate. Dropping out of school, a slow killer of the American dream, is placing all of society in jeopardy. We can do something and must do something now. We must find ways to cooperate and coordinate with each other for all children.

Overview: Finding solutions to reduce the numbers of at-risk youth would be a dream come true for many people. Raising the public's awareness and support levels, implementing effective systemic changes, promoting cooperation and collaboration among those involved with at-risk youth are necessary for our state and nation to make any significant impact.

Contributing Factors: Multiple, interacting factors that contribute to students dropping out of school can be classified into two major categories: school related and family related. Poor academic achievement, overaged for grade truancy, poverty, minority status, low expectations, pregnancy/parenting are predictors of dropping out of school.

Early Identification and Intervention: Much is known about factors that have strong implications for predicting school success or failure. Schools must use this knowledge to widen the focus of the instructional process to more closely match the interests and learning styles of all students.

Alternatives: A continuum of treatment that deals with problems from conception until children get through our public school system is needed. Alternatives must include the whole picture, not merely stop-gap, immediate, emergency measures. Full-day kindergarten, expanded four-year-old programs, lower pupil/teacher ratios, increase in counseling, accessible vocational education are examples of appropriate programs.

Staff Development and Training: Teacher education programs recognize that the qualities and skills needed for effective interaction with at-risk youth are the very same qualities that serve well in other instructional situations. Teachers must possess communication, interpersonal, and organizational skills. They must be competent in subject matter and empathetic with the myriad of obstacles facing at-risk youth.

Following the morning presentations, boxed lunches were served informally to allow for networking among the participants. Small group work completed the afternoon session. Under the direction of a trained facilitator and recorder, the participants gave perceptual responses to a questionnaire developed by Dr. Michael Rowls of the University of South Carolina. Although individual responses were discussed, group consensus was reached and recorded.

Participants' contributions are summarized in the proceedings document. This proceedings document is being published and disseminated to state leaders for the purpose of developing policy and programs and shaping agendas for future conferences.

Panelists' Presentations

Sam Drew

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you on behalf of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center. Our purpose today is to raise questions more than it is to answer them. This will be a searching process—a step toward constructing a common framework in which to develop solutions for this most pressing problem. We appreciate the commitment each of you has made by accepting our invitation to participate in this forum, both as a listener this morning and as an active searcher this afternoon in our small group sessions.

We are very pleased to co-sponsor this event with the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University. We feel very fortunate to have such a Center in our state. We also feel fortunate to have with us today the person most responsible for its existence, Mrs. Esther Ferguson. She has taken time from her very busy schedule to make some brief remarks to us and will be introduced in a few moments. But first lef me introduce another special person to you.

Mrs. Linda Shirley serves as state coordinator of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson. She has served in this capacity since its inception a year ago, and has been the real driving force behind the Center's efforts in South Carolina in its first year of operation. We are indeed fortunate to have a person of Linda's calibre serving in this capacity. I'd like to call on Linda Shirley now to extend her welcome on behalf of the Center and to recognize some important people.

Linda Shirley

Good morning. On behalf of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson Univesity and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, I, too, welcome you and appreciate the commitment that you have made to spend some time with us today. This forum is the result of much hard work, planning, cooperation, and collaboration. It represents a beginning. We thank each of you for coming today. We urge you to stay with us the entire day, because we value your input and perceptions as we look at "Youth At Risk: South Carolina's Search for Direction."

"Mrs. Ferguson is a prime example of how a private citizen became aware of a growing crisis, and chose to do something about that crisis. She is a determined woman, with a vision not only for her state, but for her country."

Linda Shirley

I want to recognize some special people who have put forth great effort to make this day happen: the staffs of the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School and the National Dropout Prevention Center. These are the people who work daily to make things happen, and we do appreciate the efforts they put forth. We are also thankful that we have a group of you out there who volunteer your time to serve with us as Advisory Board Members, both for the Network and for the Research and Training Center. Among

those board members are the volunteers for our forum planning committee. We thank those people for the extra work they did in helping us prepare for this forum. On that planning committee were: Dr. John V. "Dick" Hamby, Mrs. Tunky Riley, Dr. Elizabeth Gressette, Dr. Denard Harris, Mr. Marion Parrish, Mr. Sam Drew, Dr. Jonnie Spaulding, Dr. George Lackey, and Dr. Jim Ray. We owe a lot to these people, who have spent hours getting together the right kind of people, the right details, and logistically working out the arrangements for today.

Now, it is with great pride and pleasure that I introduce Mrs. Esther Ferguson. Mrs. Ferguson is the founder of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University. She is also the newest member of the South Carolina Network Advisory Board. It is because of Mrs. Ferguson's interest and commitment to the youth of our country that we are here today. Mrs. Ferguson is a prime example of how a private citizen became aware of a growing crisis, and chose to do something about that crisis. She is a determined woman, with a vision not only for her state, but for her country. Her enthusiasm, her energy, and her efforts make things happen. You will see for yourself that she can inspire, motivate, and challenge people to act. We are indeed fortunate that she chose to be with us today at this forum. Please welcome one of South Carolina's very own, Mrs. Esther Ferguson.

Esther Ferguson

I am especially pleased to be a part of this forum today. It is like a homecoming for me. I was born in Hartsville, so as a fellow South Carolinian, I feel that I can share my personal story with you of how I became involved in a national effort to prevent children from dropping out of school.

I feel eminently qualified to talk about at-risk students—because I was one myself. I always knew that I was bright enough, but I had a very difficult time in school. It was not until I was an adult that I discovered I suffer from a very crippling condition called Dysgraphia.

"We must wage a war . . . and we must have the courage to back up our concern with money and action."

Esther Ferguson

I tell you this to make three points. The first is that in spite of personal handicaps, it is possible to succeed. I am now very blessed. I was 39 years old when I graduated from the University of South Carolina, and by the time I was 40, I had received the first of my honorary degrees because I had raised $20 million for charity. I have published in three national journals, I sit on five boards of directors—and am an officer on four of them—and I founded the National Dropout Prevention Fund, the largest private sector board ever assembled in American history on this issue.

The second point is that there are hundreds of thousands of young people in our country who are at risk of failing school, of dropping out, of never being able to succeed in society. We lose 3,000 children every day from our public schools. This a national crisis—something is wrong when one in every four first graders will fail to graduate from high school 12 years later. I understand the pain and the shame of what school failure can do to someone's personal life and to their families. And I know that this crisis of our schools is a "slow killer of the American dream" and places us all in jeopardy.

And this brings me to my third point: We must do something and we can do something. We must wage a war. We must become aware of the problems of at-risk students. And we must have the courage to back up our concern with money and action. It was only three years ago that I first became aware of the crisis our nation faces when someone walked into my house in New York City and said, "Esther, did you know that 80,000 students go into the high school system every year in this city and that 40,000 of them don't graduate?" Well, I did not know it then, but I know it now—and I am scared.

We founded the National Dropout Prevention Center to take action on this problem. And I came to South Carolina last month to plead with our state legislature for core funding for the Center, so that I could go to foundations to raise program money. This summer, we are bringing one of the brightest minds in this country today on this issue to the Center to become its executive director. We are also working with the National Academy of Sciences in Washington to produce a white paper for the American people, which will address the issue of what state governments and the federal government ought to be doing. We must do more to stop this terrible waste of human resources in our country.

But I am also hurting for our state and I am scared to death. According to Education Secretary William Bennett, schools in this country have made progress in recent years, with South Carolina being highlighted for making the greatest gains in SAT scores when compared to other states. However, our state continues to rank near the bottom on almost every other scale of educational success.

I lived in Georgetown once, and do you know what I learned about that area? Many of our young people had lived there all their lives and had never seen the sea! I have often wondered if this is indicative of the kinds of disadvantages our children must suffer all over our beautiful state. We must speak up and let people know that we have problems.

We must find ways to cooperate with each other and coordinate our efforts. We must learn to care for all our children. It is up to us—everyone in this room—to see to it that we provide all our children with the kinds of opportunities to grow and learn so they will not wind up on the at-risk list.

I need you, and all the children of South Carolina need you! Thank you.

Sam Drew

Thank you, Mrs. Ferguson, for being with us today and for your continuing support of the young people in South Carolina.

The problem with children at risk is rapidly emerging as one of the most important of this decade. It is vitally important that the principal actors in the solution of this problem come together and coordinate their efforts to raise the pertinent questions and to develop the most promising solutions. This forum is an attempt to do that for South Carolina. We know that there are many local efforts currently under way aimed at solutions to this problem. Many other efforts are poised to begin. Our purpose in convening you today is to focus your attention on the questions around which state policy and programs might be formulated. We're not here to generate solutions. As I said to you before, we are here to search for direction—direction for the coordination of the efforts of the many agencies and individuals who are and will be involved in our state's efforts to curb the wasted resources of our youth at risk. This forum will be part of a continuous process of policy development. You here today have the opportunity to participate in the shaping of that policy. The results of this forum will be widely disseminated and hopefully used as a framework in which our state can develop its policy regarding at-risk youth.

To begin the search process, the planning committee conceived a four-part presentation on the topics of Contributing Factors, Early Identification and Intervention, Alternatives, and Staff Development and Training. We considered these topics to be the corner pieces in the puzzle of at-risk youth.

This is the starting point of our work today. As you listen to the panelists, we would like for you to formulate your own questions, to take a look at what you feel the sense of direction should be, and to think about the particular pieces of puzzle you might hold because of your specific expertise or experience. This afternoon, we're going to ask you to put those pieces on the table for us to consider.

"The problem with children at risk is rapidly emerging as one of the most important of this decade. It is vitally important that the principal actors in the solution of this problem come together and coordinate their efforts to raise the pertinent questions and to develop the most promising solutions."

Sam Drew

If we're eventually going to solve the puzzle, we certainly have to have a clear picture of what the puzzle looks like. Dr. Dick Hamby has been the acting director of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University since its inception a little over a year ago. He spent the better part of that time researching this problem. He has visited projects in South Carolina and nationwide, and is perhaps the one person in our state best prepared to address all of the issues in order to give us a clear picture of the puzzle. We've asked Dr. Hamby to begin this panel presentation by giving us an overview of the problem.

Dick Hamby

Good morning. I also want to offer my warm welcome to each of you and thank each of you for caring enough to be here today.

Esther Ferguson has talked about having a dream. We all have dreams. Dreaming is sort of like motherhood and apple pie. It's the American way. Our dreams don't always come true, they don't always materialize. But every now and again we are the beneficiaries of a dream come true. Today is such a time for me and I'm sure also for Esther Ferguson, Linda Shirley, Sam Drew, Jonnie Spaulding, and I hope for many others of you who have worked very hard this past year. I want to also thank the staffs who have been introduced, the forum planning committee, the forum panel, and anyone else who has had a hand in making this a reality today.

This forum is a dream come true. Not just because it was planned and because it's happening; rather it's important because it represents what can be. It's not just a culmination, it's a commencement, and as Sam said, it's a step toward a future in which we hope to see many more such gatherings.

We're here today because we dared to dream. Esther Ferguson dreamed of establishing a National Dropout Prevention Center. She came to our state in the spring of 1986, and she shared that dream with Clemson University and with former Governor Dick Riley. In October of 1986, we established the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University with the help of a lot of people—our President, Max Lennon; Provost David Maxwell; Vice Provost Jerry Reel; Dean of the College of Education, Jim Matthews; Head of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Gordon Gray; and Director of the Strom Thurmond Institute and a member of the Board of Directors of the Dropout Prevention Fund, Horace Fleming.

Of course, Esther hasn't stopped dreaming of what might be as her presence here today indicates. It was through Esther's efforts in 1986 that the door was opened for us to apply for a grant through

the South Carolina Department of Public Safety in the Governor's Office. I was given the task of writing a proposal. I had a dream of developing a state network whereby all segments of our state could join hands to help each other deal with this serious youth problem. We received our grant in the spring of 1987, and I had the good fortune to bring on board as coordinator of this network an extremely capable and dedicated professional, Linda Shirley. The success to date of this network I credit to her, and to the network advisory committee and its chairman, Mrs. Tunky Riley. We all had a dream of a better way of life for our young people. Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the outstanding cooperation and the help we received from the staff of the Department of Public Safety, especially Robert Greene, Jeanne Carlton, and Catherine McKnight.

In the summer of 1987, we linked up with Sam Drew and Jonnie Spaulding, who had just organized the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center. We have worked very closely together because our missions and goals are complementary and mutually enhancing. For instance, I serve as a member of the Research and Training Center Advisory Committee, whose chairman, Dr. George Lackey, has provided outstanding leadership in developing the goals and activities of that Center. Sam Drew is a member of the State Network Advisory Committee. Jonnie and Linda have been coordinating several projects, the most recent of which has been a state survey of dropout prevention programs and activities. As Sam has already said, these two groups are co-sponsoring this forum. I'm glad that Sam, Jonnie, George, and the others at Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School had a dream about what at-risk youth need.

Many of you here have heard State Superintendent Charlie Williams speak, and you know that he has a dream to provide quality education for all the children in South Carolina. It was that dream that led him to appoint a dropout prevention task force in 1986 which has offered a set of recommendations for dealing with this issue throughout the school system. I was honored to be a member of that task force as were several of you here today. Through Charlie's leadership, the State Department of Education is now making a concerted effort to address the dropout issue under the capable guidance of Jim Ray, Frank White and other state department personnel. Of course, I must mention the dreams of the present Governor, Carroll Campbell, and his dedicated staff who are working diligently to see that we continue the progress already begun, and begin new initiatives for a more comprehensive attack on educational and related problems. Denard Harris and Marion Parrish are continuing the great work that was begun by Floride Martin and her staff. Also, there are many who serve in our state legislature who have the foresight and the courage to proclaim that our young people are our most valuable resource and to pass legislation necessary to ensure that this resource not be wasted. We can't forget those dedicated staff in our public schools and state agencies who are out there every day in the trenches fighting the battles for our at-risk young people.

I like to think that each of you is here today because you have a dream, and you want to share it with others. It's comforting to know that we're not dreaming alone. In the two years that I've been involved in the National Dropout Prevention Center, a tremendous amount of activity has occurred on the national scene. The National Dropout Prevention Network has been formed and is now affiliated with the Center at Clemson University. A number of educational organizations have begun national efforts, most notably the National Education Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Education Commission of the States, and the Interstate Migrant Education Council. The National Association of Governors has been active in developing policies to deal with at-risk students. Business involvement has become very strong, as evidenced by the work of the National Alliance of Business, and by the establishment of community efforts such as the Boston Compact. Private citizens have become involved, such as Esther Ferguson, Eugene Lang, and others. Non-profit organizations such as Cities in Schools and the National Urban League have increased their efforts in this area. Many state and local school districts have begun to develop programs for at-risk youth. Some notable progress has been made in California, in our sister state, North Carolina, in Florida, in Michigan, and in Kentucky to name a few. Of course, there has also been a proliferation of reports, position papers, news articles, and research studies on this issue.

But with all of this effort in our state and nation, we still have a long way to go—many problems remain unsolved and many issues unresolved. For example, how do we arrive at a standard definition

of a dropout, so we can develop an accurate accounting and reporting system? This would allow us to track individual students and deal with real people, instead of cold, impersonal statistics. How do we encourage and sponsor research, which is necessary to delineate the causes of dropping out, so we can decide what to do about it, and who should be doing it? How do we promote higher academic standards while at the same time providing for the needs of youth who have great difficulty meeting the standards as they now stand? In South Carolina, for example, this raises the question of how we reconcile the fact that last year we retained more than 40,000 young people in grades 1-8, knowing that being overaged for grade level is one of the best predictors of dropping out of high school.

What will happen when we begin to impose the exit exam as a requirement for graduation? How do we restructure schools when it becomes very apparent that they're not working for all students? One aspect of this is how we can convince the general public and many educators that our public school system is for all children and that we must make it flexible enough so that it is not necessary to operate complex out-of-school programs to take care of students who do not fit in our narrowly conceived and administered system. How do we allot limited resources so as to provide a continuum of treatment for at-risk students at all grade levels? That is, how do we provide conditions early in a child's life that reduce at-risk factors, rather than waiting until the child is at risk or has already dropped out of school? How do we involve business and the private sector more intimately in helping us do the things that we just can't do alone? How do we train teachers and other youth workers to deal specifically with at-risk children and their families? And finally, how do we deal with the larger issue of public apathy; with deeper social issues of ignorance, prejudice, racism and poverty; and with widely differing economic and political philosophies of those who establish and implement policy?

"This forum is a dream come true. Not just because it was planned and because it's happening; rather it's important because it represents what can be."
Dick Hamby

I mention these issues not to be pessimistic, but realistic, and to provide you with a perspective and a context within which to view what we're to do today. As Sam has said, our goal is to explore all of these issues and raise a variety of questions for you to consider. It's neither possible nor prudent to try to cover every issue related to youth problems, so our panel will confine their comments to four broad issues that Sam mentioned earlier—the Contributing Factors; Early Identification and Intervention; Alternatives; and Staff Development and Training. This morning's session is very important for laying groundwork and stimulating thinking, but it is only half of the forum. Our meeting will not be complete without your help in the afternoon session. At that time you will be given the opportunity to respond to these remarks and give suggestions and advice.

There is one issue that has not been assigned as a specific topic, although several of our panelists may mention this. I want to say just a couple of words about the issue of networking. In a state such as South Carolina, which has strong legislative oversight and many autonomous and semi-autonomous agencies, networking is vitally important but also extremely difficult to achieve. There are very good reasons for this. Every organization is developed for a purpose. Once established,

the organization's function becomes not only fulfillment of its mission, but the protection and maintenance of its existence. The underlying motivation of the members of the organization becomes the perpetuation of the organization, because organizational survival means individual survival. When resources are limited so that its existence and/or its members are perceived to be threatened, then maintaining survival may become more important than the mission for which the organization was originally created. Often competition for resources among organizations becomes so strong that they are unable to cooperate in ways that ensure the welfare of all and allow them to accomplish the missions for which they were established.

What we must do in South Carolina is to learn to deal with our fear of extinction so as to reduce the level of competition among ourselves and our respective agencies. We must learn how to enhance the attractiveness of cooperation so that it is seen as having more survival value than the competition. Two things should give us hope that we are moving in this direction. First, there are plenty of problems in our state. There are enough to go around; nobody has to be left out. Secondly, the successes of this last year in developing links among the National Dropout Prevention Center, Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center, the State Department of Education, the legislature, the governor's office, state agencies, the private sector, businesses, educational groups, and individuals lead me to believe that we are on a threshold of a new era of communication, cooperation, and coordination in our state.

It is my wish that each of us leave here today with a renewed dedication to a common faith that has not been seen in this state for a long time, if ever. It is also my wish that each of you leaves here today believing that indeed, dreams do come true.

Sam Drew

Thank you, Dick. You leave us with the understanding that there are plenty of questions to be asked.

The issues of dropouts and at-risk youth are perceived by many to be a problem of the schools. How do we convince people then that this a societal problem and therefore everyone's responsibility? How do we deal with the multiple interacting factors? These are just a couple of questions that we asked our first panelist to cover for you.

Mr. Ira Barbell is presently serving as executive assistant for children and family services in the South Carolina Department of Social Services. This position requires both administrative and programmatic responsibilities for traditional child welfare programs within the state. He has extensive experience in the field of social work, having served as a social worker in the public sector for more than 17 years. His experience has ranged from direct service in areas of foster care and child protective services to supervision and administration. He earned a master's degree in social work at the University of Buffalo in New York, and is a member of the National Association of Social Workers and other professional organizations. I'd like to introduce Mr. Ira Barbell.

Ira Barbell

Thank you. I've been involved in education for a number of years. I served on a school board for 12 years in New York. I was president for five years—going through strikes and curriculum changes in that school district. Dropout prevention has long been an interest of mine, from the standpoint of the educational system as well as from the public social services agency. What I will try to do today is to present information on the mutiple interacting factors, why people should become concerned and involved, what issues we as advocates will face, and finally, some recommendations that hopefully will contribute to the discussion this afternoon.

The nationwide dropout rate is 25 percent. Approximately 10 million children will drop out before finishing high school. The characteristics of the at-risk youth who drop out of high school have been

clearly documented in research and tend to fall into two categories. First, academic performance. At-risk students in any grade tend to achieve below expected grade levels, are often overaged for their grade, have failed courses, are low in academic tracks, and have poor academic self-esteem. The other major category has to do with difficult conditions in their families. Dropouts and at-risk children tend to live in one-parent families, usually with their mothers. They come from families with income below the poverty level, families with child abuse and neglect problems, and families with low educational attainment and aspirations for their children. A higher percentage of these at-risk youth are in minority families, and many of the at-risk youth themselves are parents. Allowing these at-risk youth to fail in our educational process can no longer be tolerated. In 1956, high school dropouts earned about the same salary as high school graduates. By 1980, the earning power had decreased to 70 percent. This underscores the negative impact of education in today's changing job market. Future changes in technology in our society will be even greater during the next 30 years. High school dropouts and students with poor skills will not be able to contribute. They will put themselves, their communities, the state, and the nation at a disadvantage.

Furthermore, the aging American population means that fewer workers will have to produce far more services and goods for more retirees. Our growing retiring population cannot afford dropouts. It cannot afford poor basic skills among today's and tomorrow's students because their basis of support will be further eroded. The ties between education and future economic success for citizens of all ages have never been greater. If at-risk children and youth are to contribute their critical part to this economic well being and the well being of our communities, bold new actions will be necessary. This will require cooperation and assistance of educators, parents, students, business leaders, social agencies, senior citizens, and policy makers. However, as we all realize, change is never easy. Making new investments in tight economic times is always difficult. But investing in strategies to help youth at risk of failing is a far better economic venture then the eventual cost to all taxpayers when these same youth drop out of school and become unemployable because of poor skills. Fortunately research has shown that improvements can be made when carefully designed programs are established. A wide variety of programs exists that provide compensatory and remedial assistance for students who are not succeeding.

Before going into some of the programs, I think we have to deal with the fact that 80 percent of the poor in this country are women and children. And if the projections are accurate, the poverty population, which has increased steadily, will be by the year 2000 composed almost solely of women and children. We must ensure that this high risk population is provided the opportunity to achieve self sufficiency. We must ensure adequate benefits and health care for those who cannot meet their essential needs. We must ensure that the programs developed preserve and support the family unit. Children cannot learn if they have no home, they're hungry, have no clothing, and need medical care. Washington has convinced the people of this country that we have given too much money to the poor. They've created a climate so that someone like Charles Murray can advance a theory that giving assistance to the poor actually hurts people and makes the problem worse. They've constructed images of lazy, drunken welfare cheats, and discredited anything like welfare. And then they've thought up their own welfare plan for the defense industry. Aid to Families with Dependent Children in this country is only one percent of the federal budget. When you talk about welfare and education combined, it is eight percent of the federal budget. When you talk about defense, it's 30 percent of the federal budget. It's not welfare that caused the trillion-dollar deficit. No matter how hard we try at the state level, until we change what is happening in Washington, there is no real hope for dramatic progress. Washington must be made to understand that our greatest commitment has to be to our children.

That said, what are some of the specific programs that are being recommended to deal with at-risk youth? First, provide in-home assistance for first-time, low-income parents of high-risk infants. Children can be identified at birth as high risk. It is critical that these children receive appropriate stimulation as soon as possible to eliminate further unnecessary handicapping conditions.

Second, develop outreach initiatives using community and religious organizations to assist young children who have only a single parent or guardian as their sole source of nurturing. One in five of all children live in single-parent homes. By 1990, nearly one in four will live in a single-parent household. Seventy percent of these households are headed by women. These children need day-care services. Estimates are that 10 percent of public school enrollees are latchkey children who are without adult supervision for a length of time, either before or after school or both. Outreach and support by cooperative community groups can provide much needed assistance for the parent in his/her role, can give security and reassurance to the child, and allow the community to have an integral part in the development of responsible citizens for the future. Schools, together with other social agencies, must play a role in providing child-care services.

"We must be able to articulate clearly our vision for the future and gain the cooperation of community, business, agency, legislative, and educational leaders if we are going to be successful in implementing any recommendations."

Ira Barbell

Third, provide kindergarten for all children. Research indicates children who have kindergarten perform better than those who have not. Provide quality early childhood development programs for at-risk four-year-olds and, where feasible, three-year-olds. Again, research has shown good preschool programs for at-risk children prevent school failure. Provide all interested parents of preschool children with information on successful parenting practices. People are not born successful parents. Effective parenting comes as a result of understanding the relationship between development and behavior. Becoming a parent for the first time can be frightening, especially for the young parent. Extended family members are not always available to help or give guidance. Research shows that parents of at-risk preschoolers can benefit from training, as well as reading and talking to their children. We need to develop state and local structures through which all agencies, educational agencies and social agencies, can work together to provide appropriate programs for youth and their parents. Every effort must be made to capitalize on the strengths of all those who provide services for preschool children.

Once a child enters the school system, we need to provide extra help in the basic skills for students who have major deficiencies. They need to experience success. As indicated earlier, being retained by one grade increases the risk later on of dropping out by 40-50 percent. If a child is retained by two grades, it jumps to 90 percent. Students who are at a disadvantage are the fastest growing population in both degree and volume that the educational system must deal with. We must adequately fund remedial and compensatory programs at all grade levels. We must develop training incentives for teachers and principals to employ effective practices and programs, provide a challenging curriculum, provide reliable and valid assessments of student performance, establish alternative programs for youth who drop out, and establish cooperative programs involving schools and families so parents can learn how to support their children's teachers. Success in school will require active partnerships between parents, students, educators, business people, social agencies, senior citizens, and policy makers.

What are the difficulties we are going to face going forward? First of all, state and local interagency structures need to be put in place. Forums such as this need to be developed for gathering

information, sharing resources, planning cooperatively to avoid duplication, and reaching consensus on the who, what, where, why, when, and how much needs to be done. We need to articulate a vision as to what we want the public to understand regarding at-risk youth. We need to know where we are going if we are to get there. Otherwise, we will go off in many different directions.

Early discussions of these issues will help diffuse turf disputes and lay the groundwork for future cooperative ventures in public and private sectors. Without such initiatives we risk lack of communication and understanding among the advocates. The new initiatives will require on-going funding and a long-term commitment for full implementation. We have seen it happening already in South Carolina. Compensatory and remedial classes are expensive. Training teachers to implement these programs takes time. Careful effort is going to be required or we risk the fact that people will label this approach as a give-away program, not realizing that at-risk children and youth who drop out will cost the taxpayers more dollars in welfare and prison costs in the long run. When implementing measures to meet educational standards beyond preschool, the educational community must speak with one voice. Teachers, principals, and superintendents must not be divided. Educators and parents comprise less than a majority of the population, and any division among the ranks will make funding and improvement politically impossible.

As Dr. Hamby indicated earlier, perhaps the most difficult obstacle is going to be public apathy. Unless public enthusiasm for providing quality services for at-risk youth is developed and nurtured, the public may slip slowly into apathy. One way to prevent this from happening is greater involvement of business, industry, and civic leaders in oversight committees, maintaining a high level of public and private accountability. The one thing that we can all count on is that there are going to be obstacles, many of which cannot be anticipated. The important thing to remember is to have mechanisms through which the problems can be anticipated and alternatives proposed. Strategies must be planned to meet anticipated obstacles and materials prepared in advance to defend positions. We must be able to articulate clearly our vision for the future and gain the cooperation and involvement of community, business, agency, legislative, and educational leaders if we are going to be successful in implementing any recommendations. The benefits are worth it, and our children deserve it. Thank you.

Sam Drew

Thank you, Ira.

If we are to reduce risk factors for our youth, then we first must know what those factors are and we must be able to intervene early. What are the predicators? At what age do we identify the at-risk student, and what identification instruments exist? These are a few of the questions posed to our next panelist, Dr. Eleanor Duff.

Dr. Duff is a graduate of Southern Illinois University and came to South Carolina as coordinator of early childhood education at the University of South Carolina, where she later became associate dean in the college of education. She presently serves as a professor of education at the university. Since 1984, Dr. Duff has served on a continuing basis with The Noor Al Hussein Foundation for the establishment of a nationwide program in early childhood education in the Kingdom of Jordan. She has served as chairperson of the Interagency Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development and Education in the Governor's Office, and has served as a consultant in early childhood education both in the state and around the country. I'd like to introduce Dr. Duff.

Eleanor Duff

Good morning. I have to begin this morning with a confession. When Dr. Spaulding called me and invited me to take part in this activity today, I said yes right away. A few days later she called back and said we are preparing a list of questions in the area we would like for you to particularly address, will you do it that way? Naturally, I agreed. But how many of you have known a kindergarten teacher

that can confine her remarks to just a narrow range of topics, especially with one as serious as that we are dealing with today?

I would like to begin by saying how pleased I am to have this opportunity to be with you today to talk about what is probably one of our greatest wasted resources—the school dropout. The growing seriousness of this problem has been the topic of numerous investigations, yet as Dr. Hamby has pointed out, we still seem to have more unanswered questions than we have answers. We must acknowledge the complexity of this challenge and the multi-disciplinary perspective that will be required if we treat the problem responsibly. We are very fortunate today to be here, in this kind of mixture of professionals, looking at the problem and trying to find some new directions and new commitments on behalf of many of our state's youngsters.

You will note that I have not included a lot of statistics or specific research findings in my remarks. I have instead elected to respond from my own personal experiences as a professional educator. That experience includes several years as a classroom teacher, a public school administrator, and currently a teacher educator. It is from this background of study and firsthand experience, related to children and schools, that I approach this issue with strong feelings. Quite candidly, as a professional educator, I am prepared to acknowledge that we have obviously left many stones unturned in our attempt to address the needs of this large and growing population of youngsters, those who daily make the decision to leave school. In the last sentence I deliberately refrained from using the term "educational needs"; the complexity of the needs of the youngsters described to be at risk far transcends the school's ability to meet them as a single entity. In other words, the education community cannot and must not be expected to solve the dropout problem alone. So, as a teacher, I speak from the arena that I know best, the school.

I would like to begin by offering three rather broad general observations. First, looking at the nature of schooling from the perspective of a potential dropout, it is not difficult to recognize that the structure of a typical school in many ways works in opposition to the needs of at-risk youngsters. A simple observation of the school process shows how, with each increasing grade, the focus of the instructional process tends to narrow and involves less personal interaction between teachers and learners. I know many good teachers who are tremendously concerned about the unmet needs of these youngsters. However, the instructional demands accompanying the basic skills movement currently sweeping this country preclude their having either time or energy to do more.

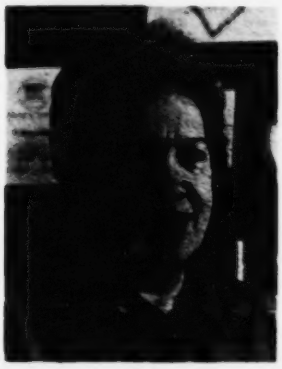
Second, standardized tests are required of all children at entrance to school and at specific points throughout the school experience. As a consequence, there is within each school in this state an abundance of information pertaining to the developmental levels and academic status of the children enrolled. But the current emphasis on academics tends to place greater emphasis on using that test data to determine what children know and don't know than on restructuring or reshaping the instructional practices of teachers. It would appear that we have a tremendous need to make a gigantic shift from our way of using test data to simply group and rank students, to placing greater emphasis on examining test results in ways to understand the specific learning needs of all youngsters, especially those identified to be at risk. We must actively use these understandings in planning and designing instruction to meet those specific needs.

Third, in many respects, the reward system of the school is completely out of sync with the value system of at-risk youth. Too often there is very little that is intrinsically satisfying about the educational process, especially for this group, simply because the instructional experiences often lack any relationship to their most immediate interests or needs. The choice of the school's rewards, such as good grades or getting into college, holds little meaning or value for these youngsters. Except for the social opportunities available by coming to school, the school experience is in many respects almost totally disassociated with their real lives. As a consequence, by the time the youngsters reach the ninth or tenth grade, they have toughed it out about as long as they can, so they drop out. Unless one is very good at doing those academic tasks associated with and rewarded by the typical school,

one is not likely to gain internal reinforcement or self sufficiency through such experiences. So, where is the holding power that should be associated with school excellence? Certainly the school is charged with the responsibility to respond constructively to children of all backgrounds and all social conditions.

With respect to powerful predictors for identifying at-risk students, we know a great deal about several factors that have strong implications for predicting school success or failure. The socio-economic status of the family, family influence on various aspects of the child's development, efficient use of language, as well as style and ways of learning—all are contributing factors. The school can do little to influence changes in those factors most closely associated with the family or the youngster's ability at the outset. However, it can modify the learning environment and the learning conditions of the school for the marginal student. One of the major challenges to the school then is to design and conduct instruction that more closely matches and is compatible with the ways of learning for all students. While successful students are generally suited to the convergent instructional scheme of the typical school, students with divergent learning styles, often the at-risk youngsters, are seldom recognized as having different instructional needs, let alone having those needs appropriately addressed. We educators tend to make few adjustments or modifications in the schools' modes of instruction, especially targeted toward at-risk students.

At what age or grade level do we begin to identify at-risk students? In this state, we have formally identified such children in several ways. The State Department of Education identifies at-risk children at age four in determining the eligibility for the four-year-old program in the public school. Such children are identified through the use of standardized observation, combined with additional local and district criteria focusing on such factors as the mother's educational level, and family economics. The South Carolina Department of Social Services identifies at-risk children to be served by block grant child-care monies based on economic eligibility criteria. Headstart, again based on economic eligibility criteria, identifies children for that program by age three.



"Though we cast about lots of professional verbage, there's a great deal that we professionals, by specialty, do not fully understand about the inter-active nature of the various developmental needs of this group."

Eleanor Duff

With respect to identification instruments administered to young children in school, two instruments are currently used most widely for assessing development in several critical areas related to school readiness. The first is the Developmental Indicators in the Assessment of Learning Revised, or better known as DIAL R. This instrument is administered to youngsters entering the four-year-old program in the public school, and it assesses the child's development with respect to motor skills, understanding of concepts, and language. The results yielded by this instrument predict the child's readiness for formal instruction. The second instrument, and the one that the state routinely administers at grade one, is the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, or the CSAB. The CSAB assesses the accomplishment of 12 kindergarten objectives which emphasize development in social, physical, cognitive, and emotional areas. Six more objectives are assessed through teacher observation. Again, the results of these assessments offer tremendous opportunity for teachers not only to gain insight into the child's total development, but also to provide important clues as to how instruction might be shaped to meet individual learning needs.

What is the relationship between identification and program strategies? When you have identified kids at risk, you know they're from families at risk. Program strategies in the school cannot eliminate all the negative family impacts on the at-risk child in a short period of time. In the case of very young children, we have tons of research to support the value of child development and education experiences for later school learning. Three of the most positive, well documented, long-term effects resulting from high quality early education experiences suggest that fewer of these at-risk children are placed in special education classes, fewer have difficulty with the law, and fewer drop out of high school. Two of the major program components contributing to these findings emphasize a carefully designed curriculum, stressing active learning, use of language, and an active parent involvement component. For children lacking positive family support, it is imperative that these parents receive encouragement and guidance in ways to positively influence the child.

Older at-risk children, often abused, have learned a pattern of relating to others that tends to bring out abusive behavior toward them. Instead of redesigning the instructional expectations of the schools, such as providing a non-traditional type of curriculum and instruction, adjustments tend not to be made for such youngsters. As a consequence, their resulting behaviors tend to label them as discipline problems. At-risk youth have a range of needs as broadly diverse as that expected to be found among a population of all students. Yet we educators tend to label them as a group and offer a single treatment regardless of those diverse needs.

We have several local programs that appear to be doing some wonderful things for troubled youngsters in this area. Many of you are probably much more acquainted with the details of these programs than I, but I would like to mention a couple of examples. One is the Ropes program sponsored by Richland District 1. It is designed to enhance student self-confidence, improve abilities to cooperate and work collaboratively, and build trust in self and others, as well as to improve perseverance skills. Another program is the South Carolina Coping Skills Project, called SCOPE, developed by Dr. Susan Forman and Dr. Jean Ann Linney of the Department of Psychology at the University of South Carolina, and funded through a grant from the South Carolina Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission. In this program, students receive direct instruction and practice in utilizing coping skills to more effectively handle difficult situations they encounter in the course of their daily lives. Dr. Forman is present with us today and will be able to share more specific information on that project at a later time.

How do we identify at-risk youngsters without stigmatizing them? Again, the current organization of the school often contributes to the stigmatizing of learners. Low academic groupings in reading and mathematics lead students to follow only the most basic courses. Students who earn poor grades tend to be treated as lower class citizens. Teachers choose not to teach lower academic children. Stigmatization then, in great measure, is a byproduct of the schools' attitude toward youngsters who present challenging and, subsequently, very difficult developmental and learning needs.

How do we deal with the immediate problem of intervention while at the same time directing our efforts toward long range prevention? While there will always be youngsters with immediate needs to be satisfied, we must at the same time recognize and deal with this growing phenomenon as a global problem. Embedded therein are issues such as housing, jobs, prenatal care, teenage pregnancy, and so on. From such a perspective we must recognize that cutting down of risk factors goes way beyond simply addressing the learning needs in schools. It must include helping communities learn how to care about at-risk families. As I said earlier, prevention of dropouts must go far beyond the schools' ability to intervene and solve alone. It's not just the schools' problem. Yet, the firm hold the education system maintains on the total person of the school age youngster makes it difficult for other closely related support groups and agencies to assist in forming solutions. We in the education community tend to interpret our mandate to mean that school age youngsters are the schools' and the schools' alone—regardless of the diverse needs to be addressed, and regardless of the fact that there are other agencies with closely associated mandates and services. Fully aware that the educational system as it now operates is failing many youngsters, we continue to enforce an increasingly narrow program of academic instruction.

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How then can we develop a continuum of treatment for at-risk students? Are there effective programs for students at risk for different reasons? We know that on a continuum of treatment we must begin with a global perspective and proceed to the most specific. In early childhood education, we have a saying that "the younger the child, the more complex the needs." These needs must be addressed in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary fashion. High quality early childhood programs recognize and provide for those comprehensive needs. Increasing numbers of such programs, both private and public, are spreading rapidly nationwide. South Carolina is making tremendous strides in the improvement of the quality of its early childhood efforts. These efforts will without doubt have tremendous impact on early prevention of school failure.

At any level a continuum of care for troubled youth must involve the family and, again, it must be recognized that at-risk youngsters come from at-risk families. Though we cast about lots of professional verbage, there's a great deal that we professionals, by specialty, do not fully understand about the interactive nature of the various developmental needs of this group. Psychologists hold one set of beliefs and understanding about how youngsters think and behave, while social work professionals hold another set of beliefs pertaining to the social status and needs of families. Educators view the youngster from the perspective of academic abilities. Other professionals, such as those in law and medicine, hold systems of understanding related to their professional fields of study and practice. How do we bring together and integrate information from the various professional specialties in such a way as to collaboratively serve the at-risk youngster and his family more effectively? One thing we would all agree upon is that there is no smooth passage in our society from childhood to adulthood. We also know that little of the scientific information we have about youth and learning actually impacts social and educational practice. It is imperative that we begin to recognize the dropout as symptomatic of a larger problem. We must make a dramatic shift in the way we look at these youngsters and their needs, and ask ourselves, "What do we need to change?"

Sam Drew

Thank you. Dr. Duff made some cogent observations about the impact of schooling on the at-risk youth, and we heard Mr. Barbell's presentation before that about the impact of other societal factors. It seems evident that alternative methods must be found to deal with the problem of at-risk youth where traditional methods have failed and often even exacerbated the problem. What do we mean by alternatives? Are we talking about alternative schools, are we talking about alternative programs within the schools, are we talking about restructuring the public schools? What is the role of the community and business and industry in providing alternatives? Dr. Bob Watson, our next panelist, is well qualified to give us a start in raising questions in this area. In his present role as superintendent of Greenwood District 50, he is dealing firsthand with the results and implications of alternative education, having started several alternative schools in that district. Prior to coming to Greenwood, he served as assistant superintendent for administration in Horry County Schools. He is an excellent educator and is gaining quite a reputation around the state as a concerned and knowledgeable administrator on the issue of at-risk youth. Please welcome Dr. Bob Watson.

Bob Watson

We as educators have struggled with the children who have not been able to cope in school. Back in the 1960s when I started teaching English at Hanna High School, I was very much aware of those students who didn't quite make it. But I didn't have to worry about them much because I just took them down to the principal's office, and I generally didn't see them again. I think that happened not because I was insensitive to them, but in those days we didn't have a compulsory school act. It was largely left to the principal of the school to decide whether the child should continue to attend. We have come a long way from that time when only a fraction of our students, and not a very big fraction at that, were being educated and graduated from schools. In 1964 when I started teaching, 8 percent of the black children moved from the first grade to graduation and about 40 percent of the white children made it through. In South Carolina we are now somewhere around 75 percent. You look

at these figures and you cannot always know how many are making it through. But, we still have a large casualty list of students who manage to get out of the mainstream and into the public.

I think one of the problems we have as educators is that we tend to see things in compartments. Perhaps it is because that as we train as teachers, we live in a rectangular room and we see four walls and we tend to get like that about our problems. We see the problems that come through there, but maybe we don't look beyond that box and look at the whole problem. My thinking was like that for too long. If we look at public education and we think of it as though we are in a box that is being jostled and rocked about, we could take certain measures. We could perhaps brace ourselves to keep from being hurt or being thrown against the walls and the ceiling. But maybe that is not all we can do. Maybe we ought to poke our heads out of the box and ask for some help and say, "What is causing this box to rock?" and see what is causing it. As we look at education with our children, perhaps we are in the box. We are looking at the children as they come to us, and we are in that box rocking and rolling and bumping and jostling. Maybe we need to look out beyond the box and have a broader perspective about what's causing all that rocking.

As educators, and I am faulting myself as much as anyone, our philosophy used to be to look at students just down to the first grade. Since we began teaching kindergarten students in most public schools around 1981, we started to look back a little farther. Then with the EIA in 1984, we began to look at four-year-old programs, so we looked a little bit farther, and our box got a little bit bigger. But what do we know about those four-year-olds when they come to school? Some of them have serious problems. Those children have been alive—since conception—for about five years. And a great many things have happened to them from the time they were in the uterus to the time we as educators get them as four-year-old children. We say our job of preventing dropouts perhaps starts with the at-risk four-year-old. We have got to think about a prevention approach to keep them from getting any worse and to make improvements before they get to the first grade. Perhaps we ought to poke our heads out of the box a little and see that the four-year-old program is really an intervention program. Then you have to ask, how important is it really to focus on early childhood? Almost everything that follows early childhood is going to be affected by what happens from the time the child is conceived until that child gets to be four years old. We cannot go back and say, let's just look at those four-year-old children from that point forward. We have to be concerned about prenatal care. We have to be concerned about the age of the child in terms of months when it is born, because we know that many early-term babies do not do well in school. Self Memorial Hospital in Greenwood is currently doing a study on these children, and they can almost predict which children are going to end up in our special education programs. The tests they are giving can determine whether or not they will end up in programs to get special help.

So we as educators and those of us in social work or various other related areas have to have a philosophy that says, "What do we need to do with education?" We can't see it as this one little box from four years old to 18 years old. We've got to be concerned with the whole picture. Ask yourself, where does the state put its money? Is it on the four-year-old program? No. It is there only if you have one of the pilot programs. We have 20 kids in a class with one teacher and an aide, and they receive about two and a half hours of instruction. Start dividing 20 into two and a half hours. How many minutes is that per child? For those children who have been seriously deprived and who have not had quality parenting from the time they were very small, six minutes a day of instruction is not much. In an early childhood program, is that going to be enough? If they get 30 minutes a week of individual attention, is that going to be enough to offset the other 167 hours that they are not getting? If you begin to look at it that way, we have to ask, doesn't the state need to put more money into early childhood education? Doesn't the state need to make sure we have full-day kindergartens? Most of our children come to kindergarten, but there we provide a teacher and an aide for 30 students. It's too much of a burden for the teachers to be able to overcome. I see early childhood education as an intervention program, and I say that we need something more. We need more emphasis on that end of it. We can struggle in this box forever, and still never overcome some of things that perhaps could have been prevented early on.

As children enter the first grade, we are finding that about 25 percent of them are not ready to read and write. Some school districts are making an effort to have a K-1 class where they give them an extra year of kindergarten and try to give them a full day of instruction. I think this is necessary because what we are seeing is 25 percent failing the first grade CSAB and about 25 percent not passing the exit exam. It does not necessarily mean that those two things are related, but I'll bet you a good number of them are in both of those groups.

"Instead of an alternative being a site, it would be an idea—an idea that is part of every junior high and high school, so that there are special classes designed and directed toward working with those children who are not prepared to cope with the regular academic program."

One of the things that tends to plague us all is that we make second class citizens out of the at-risk children coming through the schools. We have Chapter 1 programs, remedial and compensatory programs, and handicapped programs, all of which tend to move children toward self-containment. Children get to the seventh and eighth grade, and maybe the ninth grade, and the pressures of adolescence begin working on them. They are no longer docile and controllable—they become more confused and more volatile. They strike and lash out at society and at the school. So we try to find a place for them, a separate place, and of course that is another attempt at intervention which may or may not be successful. For some it is, but for many it is inappropriate. Those who do not drop out will many times get pushed out or kicked out because their behavior is inappropriate, and we can't handle it. It's sad that we find ourselves with children in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades who are totally unable to cope, and we look for a last ditch measure to try to turn them around. Something went wrong before they got that far. Something went wrong a long time ago, and we were unable to do anything about it.

Dr. Duff talked about a continuum of treatment. That is exactly what we need. We need to think about it because we have to deal with the problems all the way from the time of conception until the children get through our school system. The ironic thing is, many people, even those who have children, say the ones who do not behave should be put out of the school system—put them out because then you don't have to think about them. But those children we put out are citizens. Those children, for better or worse, are going to be out there to vote. Those children are going to be out there to participate in our society. It is very easy when we sit down as a school board to say, "This is such a grievous behavior, and we can no longer tolerate it. You are henceforth no longer to come on our school campus, and we don't care what happens to you." It's sad because that child is going to go out, and one way or another we will face him again—unless, by chance, he does something dramatic and ends up in a penitentiary, in which case we will all pay for it through taxes. We have to have a broad perspective, and when we start talking about alternatives, we need to see the whole picture and not think stop-gap, immediate, emergency measures. Yes, we need those things for those who are on the way through, but as a philosophy for our society, we have to have concern all the way through. We are going to be doing intervention in school forever if we do not take a philosophy that has a much broader perspective than what we have had in the past.

In Greenwood, we have two separate alternative programs. One is a seventh and eighth grade program, located at the Connie Maxwell Children's Home. We have a public/private grant arrangement with Connie Maxwell, which has been very beneficial to us. We take seventh and eighth grade

students who are unable to cope academically or emotionally in the regular program, and we put them in this special program. There they do the Ropes course, and they do several innovative and different sorts of things. Primarily the program deals with affective behavior, which of course is what you have to deal with. You cannot get at cognitive things until you deal with feelings and emotions and those types of responses.

The second program, which Mrs. Nancy Prince directs, is our ninth and tenth grade alternative school. It's an adjunct of our high school program, with four full-time teachers and several other teachers who come in for special programs. We have just added a full-time guidance counselor to the program. Next year, we plan to put a half-time art and a half-time music teacher in the program to strengthen it. Nancy and I are always aware of the fact that what we're doing is primarily intervention. Many alternative programs that I knew about and visited a few years ago failed because the children who are the most difficult to deal with in the schools tend to get shuffled off to the alternative program. That happens occasionally in our district. Nancy has had to send some of them back to regular programs because we simply did not have the people to deal with them in the alternative program. But Nancy and the teachers have been able to turn many of these students around.

There are other ways to look at alternatives, besides a separate program. There are alternatives within the school program. This is what we hope will happen in the future. Instead of an alternative being a site, it would be an idea—an idea that is part of every junior high and high school, so that there are special classes designed and directed toward working with those children who are not prepared to cope with the regular academic program. At the elementary school level, the issue is not so much alternatives as it is assuring success in learning, which may prevent the need for alternative education. Examples of appropriate programs are a full-day kindergarten, expanded four-year-old programs, remediation for students in the first grade who score very low on the CSAB, and the placement of students with demonstrated learning problems in classes with lower pupil/teacher ratios.

At the middle school level, direct, in-school prevention, such as counseling and reduced pupil/teacher ratios, is appropriate. Short-term pull-out programs, which provide enriched opportunities for both academic and affective development, and which serve to establish and maintain the student's self confidence as well as improve social skills, appear to be effective. We are currenty trying some of those things. The total school must be involved, but you don't always see that. Another aspect of this issue that plagues us, especially in South Carolina, is the fact that our vocational education programs are largely removed from the immediate junior and senior high schools. South Carolina adopted the idea of a vocational center several years ago, and the programs and the schools were set off to themselves and we bussed in the children. One of the things that I think is very important for children is that they learn to do something with their hands, and that they have an opportunity to be involved in some meaningful work. Yet, we have removed these vocational schools from the junior and senior high schools. Vocational education is not an option for most of the children coming through, except the shop programs and some hands-on art classes and maybe pre-vocational classes, which essentially talk about what you can become. In our broader philosophy as we look at alternatives we need to think about the way we build and place vocational education in relationship to the regular school programs. In our program, the options for the students to use their hands, learn to use tools, and perhaps take an interest in something new are relatively limited because they are not part of a regular vocational program. It seems to me that we need to think about that a little differently than we have in the past.

The involvement of the community in the public schools with at-risk youth and alternative programs is very important. We are beginning to see a growing interest on the part of the community in our area of the state. Our school improvement councils have an understanding and awareness of this because many of those people are employers and people who work in government. They are looking at what they can do to help these children. Other school improvement councils are taking a similar interest.

The Adopt-A-School and the Partners For Progress programs, where schools and businesses can work together with children who need special attention, are very important. We need to be more diligent in involving the community. The emphasis is now on test scores. We saw a time a few years ago in public education where the affect was very important. We had all kinds of courses that were designed to work with middle school students, helping them to adjust. But many boards of education, with the wave of accountability that came through the states, said those things were no longer important. We don't need any of these social adjustment courses anymore, they said, we need hard line academics. Hard line academics are important, but you can't get them to students who have other problems and when the affect is in the way.

There is a new awareness that we can't do it all by merely a simple slogan of just saying no to all of the bad things going on with the academics. It's more complex than that. We have got to have a partnership with people in the community, the government, and the medical field. We need to see it as a totality. We need to see it as the big picture. We as educators need to be involved in a broad sort of way.

Sam Drew

Thank you, Bob.

Our panelists have given us a start toward a clearer understanding of the interrelated factors that contribute to this problem. They have given us a clearer understanding of prevention and intervention, and certainly a clearer understanding of alternatives. But understanding is not going to be enough if it remains an academic exercise. We're going to have to translate this knowledge to shape policy and programs. And to successfully implement policy and programs, we're going to need good, solid training programs for those who work most closely with at-risk youth. I'm not talking only about training for teachers, but about training for all of the professionals who work with this population. What professional skills and personal characteristics do they need? What type of training is needed for teachers and other professionals? How and by whom can this training be provided? Dr. James Fouche is highly interested in this piece of the puzzle, and in his current role as dean of education at Winthrop College, he is actively seeking answers to these issues and problems. Prior to coming to Winthrop, Dr. Fouche was at Northern Kentucky University. He has also served as associate superintendent for instruction for the Kentucky State Department of Education. We have asked Dr. Fouche to address this last issue for us.

James Fouche

I believe there is a special place in heaven for substitute teachers and for the fourth person to speak on panels such as these. I have three questions to address. You'll be pleased to know that throughout this morning I have spent time crossing things off and will only address those issues not yet covered. The first question relates to the skills and characteristics of those who work with at-risk students. Aside from the obvious, which is an ability for individuals who work with children to communicate well and to have effective interpersonal skills, I would emphasize organizational skills—organizational skills within the classroom. There is considerable evidence in the literature that effective teachers not only care about children, but know where they are going and know where the children are going. It was mentioned earlier that at-risk youngsters often have the most complex and comprehensive needs. Accordingly, people who work with at-risk students need to be the most organized. They also need institutional skills because as many of you know, schools are not always very pleasant places for at-risk students. Teachers need to be sensitized to this and learn to develop institutional coping skills. You can get the work done without falling prey to some of the structures that operate within schools. I'm not talking about subversion, but I am talking about getting a job done with young people.

People who work with at-risk youth need to have a knowledge of content. Probably the most intelligent comment that I've heard along these lines is attributed to John Dewey. He said that it is

important to know *what* you are teaching so that you can be free of that knowledge, so that you can concentrate on children—the people who are learning. If your focus is only on your teaching, or on the subject, then you are distracted. I know this is a false dichotomy, but I believe it is important to know what you're teaching so that you can focus on the child, especially the at-risk child.

What characteristics do people need to work with such children? It seems to me that an important trait is the quality of caring and what I call empathetic understanding. Put yourself in the place of these children and the myriad problems and obstacles that are placed before them. Try to remove as many of those as you have control over for their betterment and learning. People who work with at-risk youth need to be energetic. They need to be tenacious, and they need to be mature. It's important for children to be with mature adults, adults who are open, flexible, and don't need to have what I would call inappropriate kinds of control over other people, especially children. These adults also need to be accessible and approachable—you can get to them, they will yield to you. These are some of the qualities that I believe people who work with at-risk children need.

The second question is, should teacher education programs be designed to help prospective teachers deal with at-risk youth? The answer is, of course. I would qualify that answer by suggesting that I am not interested in creating specialized programs. We have heard about stigmas, about categorization, and I know that one of the hallmarks of a profession is to specialize. Nonetheless, I believe that the qualities needed for effective interaction with at-risk youth are the very same qualities that serve well in other instructional situations. I would argue against the creation of specialized programs, although I would acknowledge that there may be excellent specialized programs across this country.

"It's important for children to be with mature adults, adults who are open, flexible, and don't need to have what I call inappropriate kinds of control over other people, especially children."

James Fouche

We've made some progress in terms of preparation programs for teachers. We've raised admissions standards in this state; we've sought to address the public's concern that teachers often aren't very academically oriented or well prepared. I think there are costs associated with raising standards—there are young people who may have many excellent qualities and strengths they could bring to teaching who will be screened out of preparation programs. That's a real cost, but I think the enhancement of the profession is probably a more important benefit. It is very important to have bright, caring people teaching children.

We also, I think, have done a better job of integrating academic and field-based experiences. We get students involved in school settings very early in their programs. It's important to do this because they need to decide whether or not schools are places where they want to work. Also we need to see them operate in realistic settings. Field experiences ought to continue throughout the program and they ought to involve increasing responsibilities. You might begin them with observation, working with small groups, and, over time, assume greater responsibilities culminating in full student teaching.

One thing that worries me is that often when teacher educators concentrate on their students, we seek to make them adapt, and we're concerned for their success. As a consequence, we tend to

accept the settings in which they are placed. In other words, we rarely prepare people who are going to go out there and change the school setting. We put them in schools that may not be the most beneficial or helpful places for teachers, much less for children, and there is considerable evidence that beginning teachers spend most of their energies accommodating to the situations in which they are placed. When student teachers go into schools, they try to fit in, and preparation programs often work diligently to see that they do fit in.

What are the kinds of things that can be done? If we have made some progress with field experiences, if we've made some progress with admissions and other aspects of our programs, what are some of the things that we can do in teacher education to improve the situation? I think that first and foremost we need to do a better job of recruiting minorities to teacher education. The demographics of this state and across this country are of great concern to me. We are, in fact, very much in a situation where minorities are no longer coming into the profession in sufficient numbers and this presents problems. It presents problems for at-risk youth; it presents problems for all of our students; it is not simply a minority problem. We have at Winthrop the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment. Among its programs is one for teacher cadets—about 1,000 academically able high school students who are working with their own classroom teachers and with young children in exploring teaching careers. More than a quarter of the teacher cadets across the state are minority students. About a quarter are males. So there is an effort in this state to get more minority students interested in becoming teachers. We are incorporating in our program not only recruitment, but retention as well. It is an effort to provide support services for minorities in a predominantly white institution. It is a program which involves pairing our students with minority teachers, who can work with them and acquaint them with the world of teaching.

Another thing we can do is a better job of addressing the need for teachers to be flexible and accommodating in terms of learning styles. We should develop curricula that are based on the real world experiences of children. One of the costs of the focus of accountability and "back to basics" has been that curriculum in some ways has been structured and perhaps even strengthened but has often been removed from the real world. Basic skills instruction need not be isolated, unrealist, and detached. Teacher education programs have an obligation to address this issue.

What can be done within schools? Two things, and one of them is quite expensive—that is, to improve the ratio of students and teachers. Teaching children takes effort and time, and you can't do it well with large numbers. This will be very costly, but I believe it is vital. Equally important in my judgment is the need for this country and this state to empower classroom teachers. Alienated teachers don't do well with at-risk students. You've got to empower teachers so they feel responsible for what is going on in their classroom and in their school. Otherwise they are unable to provide the kind of service, the kind of teaching, the kind of caring, the kind of support, that at-risk youth need.

The last question I have been asked to address relates to the training for non-teachers in terms of at-risk youth. I don't have many good ideas in this regard. I have one general thought, and that is that training should be school-based. We should establish interdisciplinary (or interagency) school-based teams working to meet the needs of children. This involves opening up doors. It involves bringing in volunteers and working with them cooperatively in the schools. I understand the need of the teaching profession to assert itself in terms of professionalism, but often professionalism creates a wall between the profession and everyone else. I don't think teaching and schooling can afford that wall. It is not possible to do a decent job working with children and to maintain distances. Our training programs and our schools should promote an openness among teachers, and between teachers and parents. We've heard already about the need to attend to families. That's exactly what I am talking about here.

I will close by commenting that social movements or reform movements have life cycles and stages. These stages have been well documented. The first stage is alarm—to be outraged. Then we move from alarm to what is called "crisis action"— we do many things, spend money, develop

programs, and work diligently to address the problem. We often act quickly. And then the third stage, reaction, sets in. Certain strategies or approaches don't work, and there is division among participants. The final phase is often neglect—we walk away from the issue. I don't think this state, or this country, can afford to walk away from this issue. We have got to avoid the final stage. Actually the last two stages need to be attended to very considerably, and I think our best strategy has been alluded to here already. It is in the notion of networking, working together in various agencies, constituencies, and groups. I compliment the organizers of this conference and I compliment you. I look forward to working with you in this endeavor. Thank you very much.

Sam Drew

Thank you, Jim. This panel has helped us to conclude that the search for direction is not going to come easy.

I want to thank all of our panelists for the time they have devoted from very busy schedules both for the preparation of these presentations and for being with us this morning. They have done a very fine job in raising and addressing some of the critical questions and issues we are all faced with. I want to turn the tables now and tell you it's time to end your role as a listener and to begin your role this afternoon as a searcher. Together we will discuss these questions and raise additional questions and issues that will constitute the framework we have talked about.

Forum Participants' Small Group Work

Jonnie Spaulding

The afternoon session of the forum was held in the various rooms of the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center. It was designed to get input from all of the representative groups present and to delve into the ideas expressed and questions posed by the panelists of the morning session.

By color coding name badges, participants had previously been divided into seven groups. An attempt had been made to structure these groups to include representatives from education, government, state agencies, business, industry, and civic entities. Fifty forum participants attended the group sessions, 16 of whom indicated they work directly with at-risk youth. Each group was led by a trained facilitator, assisted by a trained recorder.

"The afternoon session was designed to get input from all of the representative groups present and to delve into the ideas expressed and questions posed by the panelists of the morning session."
Jonnie Spaulding

Training for the facilitators and recorders was arranged by Dr. George Ladkey, professor, University of South Carolina. Dr. Michael Rowls, also of the University of South Carolina, provided the training.

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using a questionnaire designed especially for this forum. Entitled "At-Risk Youth Opinion Questionnaire," it served as a guide for the small group work.

The method used by the facilitators was a modified Delphi Technique consisting of spontaneous responses from all group members followed by discussion and refinement until consensus was reached.

Following is a compilation of responses from all seven groups. Duplications simply emphasize that more than one group considered the answers relevant.

I. Unanswered Questions:

There are many things we don't know about dropouts and those who are on the way to becoming dropouts. Think about the field of "at-risk" youth and dropouts, then develop three to five questions you think would be important to answer in South Carolina. Be as specific as you can.

What agencies/groups are there to network human resources services and how are they to be funded?
What is the most widely accepted definition of "at-risk"?
What percentage are from dropout families?
What percentage are children of alcoholic families?
Should programs be aimed at overcoming social/family problems or behavioral/performance problems?
How do we involve the people who need to be involved?
What is the "major" goal of our educational system?
When and why does a student become at risk?
Are all children at risk or just those with identified problems?
How can South Carolina implement the networking process?
Why doesn't the state department fund dropout prevention programs?
When, how, and with whom can we intervene most effectively?
What are the primary factors which cause dropouts?
How are parents brought into the corrective process?
What did parents try to teach the "at-risk" student at home? (birth-now)
Why doesn't the educational system provide for different learning styles?
Why is education "herded" rather than individualized? Why not more self-paced?
What impact is early childhood education having in South Carolina?
What can be done to strengthen the family? What models have worked?
What type of educational program can meet the needs of a majority of at-risk children and still fulfill state requirements?
What agencies or sources provide money or other resources for at-risk students?
What South Carolina programs that target at-risk youth are successful?
Are current state funding levels sufficient? Is money available to solve problems?
What can we do to identify at-risk children at an early age?
Is the school curriculum relevant to the job market, current lifestyles?
Why aren't there more specialized, trained teachers/staff for at-risk youth?

II. Characteristics of "At-Risk" and Dropouts:

Different people define "at-risk" youth and youth who are potential dropouts in various ways. Given your own knowledge and experience, please list the *major characteristics* of at-risk youth you believe lead to (or are indicators of) their dropping out of school before they receive a high school diploma:

low self esteem
low value placed on education by the family unit
sense of separation from self/others
rebellion
working below grade level
overaged for grade
lack of purpose
lack of involvement in extracurricular activities
loneliness
poor academic achievement
unresponsive attitude
poor self esteem
lack of family support
low socioeconomic status
pregnancy
discipline problems
education is not a priority
limited academic development
parental factors, i.e., lack of parental motivation, single parent family, siblings and/or parents who are dropouts
pregnant/teen parents
poverty background
minority status
poor school performance
low educational goals
troubled family environment
slow learner
drug/alcohol abuse
starting out behind in first grade

III. **Reasons for Dropping Out of High School:**
Dropouts drop out for many different reasons. About a third to half of them report reasons that are school related. Please list below the three "school-related" reasons for dropping out you think are probably *most important*:

lack of meaning and purpose (loss of hope)
lack of respect for authority figures
bored
lack of basic skills
boredom with school
low grades
fear of school
experiencing failure/lack of clearly defined instructions
absences
discipline problems
poor academic achievement
teacher limitations to deal with "at-risk" youth

low verbal, written, and math skills leading to overage for grade level and discipline problems
boredom—lack of realistic goals
too many students, not enough teachers
student may be learning disabled, emotionally or mentally handicapped
truant or not attending school
not on grade level for age

Dropouts drop out for a variety of "other" reasons, including reasons that are work-related, family-related, and so on. Please list *three* additional reasons you think are at the bottom of why students drop out of high school:

come from a single parent home environment
the youth may be parents themselves
lack of family support to complete school
substance abuse
high risk lifestyles
dysfunctional family
students get a job
pregnancy
family issues and values, economics
lacking social skills
substance abuse
desire for perceived independence
unable to conform to discipline codes
supplemental income for family needs
double disciplinary standards between school, teachers, and students
parental unconcern
negative environment
instant gratification versus deferred gratification
truant

IV. Students Whom We Can Influence:

Given the characteristics of "at-risk" youth and the reasons that underlie why many of them drop out of high school, what types of "at-risk" youth and potential dropouts do you believe the schools can be *most successful* at working with? Based on your knowledge and experience, please list/describe up to three types of at-risk youth who would probably best be *served first* in any kind of intervention program:

young children (primary)
students failing one grade
all students "at-risk"
learning disabled
students with poor social skills
students who are slow learners
children at teachable moment—first major crisis

young children at risk
those who have achieved some successes
preschool aged children
those motivated to change
borderline academic skills
at risk for teen pregnancy
those who are motivated themselves to be helped or help themselves
those who have outside support such as family, friends, church, etc.
those who don't have a multitude of other problems, i.e., alcohol and drug abuse, have children themselves, or who don't have severe learning disabilities

V. **Programs For At-Risk Youth and Dropouts:**
There are literally thousands of programs nationally for at-risk youth and dropouts, but little agreement about what works. Given your knowledge and experience, list and describe policies/ programs that you believe work effectively:

A. List/describe school or school-district *policies* that work:

truancy policy or truancy act
parent contact
extended special education programs
vocational placement policy
work study programs/flex scheduling
in-school suspension/attendance incentives
an attitude that school is responsible for all children
a school's belief to keep children in, not out
require high priority on counseling rights with responsibilities
schools that support and encourage student involvement with extracurricular activities
encourage ownership of schools to parents and students
policies that attend to the affective domain
empower the teacher
re-examine the mission of schools
networking programs in schools

B. List/describe specific *program features* that work:

city/school programs
student/community involvement in programs
small group processing, peer counseling/tutors
positive attention to young people by concerned, caring adults
philosophy of hope for the future
structure
flexibility
students as part of the process
significant others as role models
incorporate rewards
business involvement

staff development and assignment
parental and community support and involvement
self-paced competency-based instruction
school/community team approach (alternative school programs)
curriculum that combines affective/cognitive approaches
alternative programs such as the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, John de la Howe, Wilderness Program

C. List/describe *characteristics* of teachers and others that are most important in working with at-risk youth and dropouts.

flexible
ownership of outcome
sensitive
fair
respect for self and others
patient
caring—for the students' education and well being
broad knowledge of the dropout problem
knowledgeable of high risk behavior
knowledgeable of different learning styles
empathetic
accessible
broad cultural experience—knowledgeable
good interpersonal skills—sense of humor, emotionally mature
risk takers, innovators, organized
sees student as a valuable resource
sensitive (cultural)
creative
quality of caring
mature
open, flexible, and approachable
BIONIC Teacher—believe it or not I care

Additional Comments

The educational system is overly bureaucratic, cumbersome, and unresponsive to needs. People and systems should put their money where their priorities are.

There seems to be a consensus of the group that early intervention is critical, money is best spent in early childhood programs, and there is more value for the money when spent on younger children.

What We Want to See Evolve From This Meeting

Action plan instead of redefining the problem.
Research to take place to accumulate and distribute information on grants, programs attempted, etc.

Utilization instead of dissemination.
Programs that work/resources to fund them.
Networking of resources.

It is anticipated that the information collected from the small group sessions will give direction for future topics of study and for development of strategies to alleviate some societal problems and major concerns related to at-risk youth.

Following the small group sessions, a reception was held where participants again came together for informal discussions and refreshments.

The National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University and Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research and Training Center are grateful for the participation of all who attended the Forum. Through the cooperative efforts of such concerned individuals, South Carolina may be able, indeed, to find ways to overcome these serious and frightening problems existent in our state and nation.